

"Well, I guess a dog's got to have a few fleas or he wouldn't know he was a dog."

May the Lord bless you, may you honor your priesthood, may you keep your trust with your Heavenly Father, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

We have just listened to Bishop Victor L. Brown of the Presiding Bishopric. We shall be glad to hear from the Presiding Bishop of the Church, Bishop John H. Vandenberg.

BISHOP JOHN H. VANDENBERG

Presiding Bishop of the Church

My dear brethren, it is an honor to meet with you tonight in this great assembly of the priesthood of the Church. I am very grateful for my two great counselors who have helped me so much in this new assignment that has come to me.

Sometime ago a letter came to my desk written by a woman investigator which carried with it a great deal of enthusiasm and testimony, and I would like to share with you tonight the following excerpts from this letter. Her salutation was this:

"My dearest Father Bishopric:

"You are going to be rather surprised to hear from me, but I attended Sunday services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today and was so inspired. . . .

"I owe my gratitude to just about the finest, well-cultured, and intellectual gentlemen. . . . They graciously invited themselves into my home and explained the Mormons. . . . I just had to go to Church with them on the following Sunday. The book on how Joseph Smith tells his own story was so outstanding, with great love of God for each and every human being, that my knowledge of religion certainly broadened just by meeting these two elders. . . .

"On entering the Church I was so astonished to see how many young people of today are attending church, and especially thrilled to see how the young mothers bring their lovely children. . . . The thing that touched me deeply is how the elders or brothers were so anxious just to be able to say, 'How do you do.' . . . This is something you don't see in other churches. . . .

"The Aaronic Priesthood conducted

the Sacrament . . . which was so pure with delight followed by the separation to classes. At this time the elders led me to the adult class. . . . Here is where I accumulated knowledge in one half hour that I did not know in a lifetime of fifty years. . . .

"I also enjoyed the opening prayer . . . which put a dent in my mind that these are a group of people that have to be made more known in our United States of America. . . .

"Again I say how happy I was to attend services in your Mormon Latter-day Saint Church, and how mighty proud the mission must be of the elders. They are an inspiration that many mothers and fathers today can learn the message from God to his children to make this a better world to live in like God intended it to be."

As I read this thrilling letter, I thought what a great blessing to the elders' parents and to those missionaries, although they are unaware of the great spiritual lift that they gave to this woman. As the woman stated, "I owe my gratitude to just about the finest, well-cultured, and intellectual gentlemen." I wondered what greater honor could there be than to be so highly esteemed by one's neighbors. No doubt this experience is happening time and time again the world over.

Then to think that these missionaries came from the ranks of the Aaronic Priesthood, having faithfully served until they became eligible to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood and called to the ministry of the Savior. One cannot help feeling the warmth of the Spirit as he contemplates the great Aaronic Priesthood work of this Church.

Tonight I cannot help thinking of more than 237,000 living men and boys

who have the privilege of bearing the Aaronic Priesthood. Obviously our thoughts are turned toward them because of the great responsibility that follows the offices of the Presiding Bishopric which have been placed upon us.

This great body of Aaronic Priesthood, under and over twenty-one years of age, becomes our charge, and we feel the impact of this responsibility very keenly.

While my counselors were talking about the more than 100,000 young men under twenty-one bearing the Aaronic Priesthood, my thoughts turned to the more than 100,000 over twenty-one who may be working to qualify themselves to receive the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

I have been thinking of their wives, their sons, their daughters, and their future. We realize that some of these mature brethren who bear the Aaronic Priesthood have again become active, faithful, and devoted members of the Church in order to achieve their goal. We also realize that many are recent converts to the Church who are working toward their ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. These brethren are anxiously waiting for the day when they may enter a temple of the Lord to receive their endowments and sealings through the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood. We pray that all of these may continue to enjoy the warmth of fellowship in the priesthood without any interruption. But knowing as I do that there are some who are dormant, I must confess that we will not be contented until we reason with them, until we hold out the hand of fellowship, until we assure them that the Lord calls to them, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, . . .

"For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." (Ezekiel 18:31-32.)

These brethren and their families are precious in the sight of God. He loves them, and we love them. But their lives need a "new heart and a new spirit" so that they will perpetuate no

regrets of the lost opportunities of yesterday.

While Bishop Simpson and Bishop Brown were speaking, my thoughts also turned to the special invitation extended by the First Presidency to all young men who bear the Aaronic Priesthood to attend this great priesthood meeting. We feel confident that if our eyes could travel over the closed circuit wires and peer into the multitude of gathering places, our hearts would swell with joy at the great numbers who have honored their priesthood by responding to this call.

As we speak to you young men, we speak also to your leaders, calling to their minds the challenging responsibilities of meeting your needs for spiritual growth and stability, that there may be no structural weaknesses in your faith, your integrity, and your devotion.

To emphasize the responsibilities of leadership of boys, we recall the words of the poetess W. A. Dromgoole:

Building the Bridge for Him

"An old man, traveling a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray
To a chasm deep and wide.

"The old man crossed in the twilight
dim,
For the sullen stream held no fears for
him.
But he turned when he reached the
other side,
And builded a bridge to span the tide.

"'Old man,' cried a fellow pilgrim near,
'You are wasting your strength with
building here;
Your journey will end with the ending
day,
And you never again will pass this way.

"'You have crossed the chasm deep and
wide.
Why build you a bridge at eventide?'
And the builder raised his old gray
head:
'Good friend, on the path I have come,'
he said,
'There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet will pass this way.
'This stream, which has been as
naught to me,

Saturday, April 7

Second Day

To that fair-haired boy may a pitfall be;

He, too, must cross in the twilight dim—
Good friend, I am building this bridge
for him.' ”

Leaders give heed to the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8.)

You are the trumpeters to the youth who are listening for certain sounds—positive, unwavering teachings, examples—a steady beam to guide them in preparation for a useful life of service in the dignity of the priesthood. If we, the trumpeters, do not guard our actions, our language—do not set worthy examples—how then can we expect our young men to prepare themselves “to the battle,” battle against wrongdoing—the battle they fight every day of their lives?

Now, young men, may we say to you, responsibility is a two-way street. One cannot give unless there is someone to receive. Your stake president, stake committee, bishops, general secretaries, quorum advisers, and auxiliary leaders are spending more time, giving more thought and prayer to your cause than ever before. They are the ones who give, and you are the ones who receive. We urge you to receive well, to qualify for the tasks to come. You cannot expect success without preparation.

James A. Garfield said: “Young men talk of trusting to the spur of the occasion. They trust in vain. Occasion cannot make spurs. If you expect to wear spurs you must win them. If you wish to use them you must buckle them to your own heels before you go into the fight.”

We think you should know that once each week it is our privilege as the Presiding Bishopric to receive counsel from the First Presidency on all matters pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood work of the Church. Through this association and direction, the blessings of the Aaronic Priesthood program flow out to the whole Church. Also you should know that on frequent occasions, the Presiding Bishopric meet with the general priesthood committee of the

Church to co-ordinate all our efforts in your behalf.

As I observe the prophets, seers, and revelators of the Church in council meetings, I think of the words which Joseph J. Daynes set to music:

“Come, listen to a prophet’s voice,
And hear the word of God,
“And in the way of truth rejoice,
And sing for joy aloud.

“We’ve found the way the prophets went
Who lived in days of yore;

“Another prophet now is sent
This knowledge to restore.”

The inspiration and revelation of God come through his prophets to direct the destiny of this Church. You young men belong to that Church—the greatest organization for good in all the world. Membership carries with it great responsibilities, but not greater than you can carry on your young, strong shoulders. You are young, but, as bearers of the Aaronic Priesthood, you are expected to:

1. Discipline yourselves to do that which is right.
2. To be close to your father and mother and give heed to their counsel.
3. To pray to God and to give thanks to him for his blessings.
4. To sustain the ward, stake, and General Authorities—attesting thereto by your actions.
5. To cultivate a pure heart and a clean mind.
6. To fill every assignment willingly.
7. To refuse to participate in any action or conversation which would offend the dignity of the priesthood you bear.
8. To attend all your meetings and put into practice the lessons you learn at those meetings.

Now, to the fathers, we solicit and encourage your full co-operation. It is so much easier to help your sons reach the goal when we and they know of your full support. The place of the father in the home, and his responsibilities to his family, are clearly defined in the words of President Lorenzo Snow, and I quote: “. . . if you ever secure a union in any family in Zion, if you ever secure that heavenly union which is

necessary to exist there, you have got to bind that family together in one, and there has got to be the Spirit of the Lord in the head of that family, and he should possess that light and that intelligence, which, if carried out in the daily life and conduct of those individuals, will prove the salvation of that family, for he holds their salvation in his hands." (JD 4:243.)

Now, we should all ever keep before us that sacred moment in Nephite history when Jesus was giving his last instructions to the twelve disciples: ". . . Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Nephi 27:27.)

I bear testimony to the truthfulness of this great work, and I pray our Heavenly Father to bless the great priesthood

of this Church, and I do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Hugh B. Brown:

We have just listened to the Presiding Bishop of the Church—Bishop John H. Vandenberg. Brother Richard P. Condie will now lead the congregation and the Chorus in singing, "Do What Is Right," after which President McKay has asked that Elder Hugh B. Brown be the next speaker.

The Congregation and the Men's Chorus of the Choir joined in singing the hymn, "Do What Is Right," Elder Richard P. Condie conducting.

PRESIDENT HUGH B. BROWN

Second Counselor in the First Presidency

My dear brethren, always when charged with the responsibility of appearing before the people of the Church and especially before the priesthood, I am conscious of my inadequacy, and ever desirous of securing the guidance of my Heavenly Father as I attempt to serve.

Because of the things that have happened to me in recent months, I have been searching my heart in an attempt to find justification for the Lord's goodness to me. Certainly we are all blessed beyond our merits, which fact should keep us humble and grateful.

I recommend to all, not only the young men holding the Aaronic Priesthood, but to those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, that when the excellent talks given tonight by the Presiding Bishopric are published, they read and apply their timely instructions. I certainly congratulate the Bishopric on their thorough preparation and the inspiration of their addresses. They have spoken directly, of course, to the Lesser Priesthood, because that is their special charge.

You men, most of you here, and many listening in, know that the man who stands at the head of the Melchizedek Priesthood—in fact of all the Priesthood of the Church—is the President of the Church. He presides here tonight, and

I conduct under his direction. He is an ideal model, an exemplar to all of us. He often quotes, and in his life exemplifies, the admonition of Isaiah: ". . . be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Isaiah 52:11.)

I shall not detain you long because I know from whom you wish to hear. I should like, however, to make a few observations on the responsibility of all whom God has honored by permitting them to act for him. There is need for courage and constancy in the midst of perilous and ominous world conditions. As I read of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail, I am inspired by the courage and faith which enabled him to carry on in spite of persistent and bitter persecution throughout his lifetime. When in Liberty Jail, where he spent many months in 1838-39, he felt that he had suffered about all that mortal man could endure. In an inspired appeal he prayed:

"O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?"

"How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?"

"Yea, O Lord, how long shall they